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Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) Frequently Asked Questions – Winter 2005

1. When did Michigan begin MEAP testing and how has it evolved?

The Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) was initiated by the State Board of Education, supported by the Governor and funded by the Michigan legislature through Public Act 307 of 1969 (Section 14). From 1969 until 1973, MEAP used norm-referenced tests from a commercial test publisher. Students' scores were ranked in comparison to each other, but gave no information in terms of meeting a specified standard. In 1973-74, Michigan educators began working with Michigan Department of Education (MDE) staff to develop specific performance objectives to serve as the basis for the first tests built to Michigan specifications.

Current MEAP tests are based on the Content Standards developed by Michigan educators and approved by the Michigan State Board of Education in 1995. MEAP tests are criterion referenced, meaning that each student's results are judged and reported against a set performance standard. If a student meets the standard, it means he/she meets expectations on the recommended state curriculum.

Educators from throughout Michigan continue to revise and update Michigan curriculum documents that serve as the basis for MEAP and in the development and ongoing improvement of these tests.

The Michigan Revised School Code and the State School Aid Act require the establishment of educational standards and the assessment of student academic achievement but there is no state mandated curriculum. Accordingly, the State Board of Education, with the input of educators throughout Michigan, approved a system of academic standards and a framework within which local school districts could develop, implement, and align curricula as they see fit.

The MEAP tests have been recognized nationally as sound, reliable, and valid measurements of academic achievement. Students who score high on these tests have demonstrated significant achievement in valued knowledge and skill. Further, the tests provide the only common denominator in the state to measure in the same way, at the same time, how all Michigan public school students are doing on the same skills and knowledge.

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2. What grades and subjects were tested during the Winter 2005 testing cycle?

Grade Tested	Subjects
Grade 4	English Language Arts* Mathematics
Grade 5	Science Social Studies
Grade 7	English Language Arts*
Grade 8	Mathematics Science Social Studies

*English Language Arts tests includes both reading and writing, as well as an optional Listening test.

The writing test consists of an extended response based upon a writing topic. Other subject tests contain a combination of multiple choice items and constructed or extended writing responses.

3. Where can I find information about how to read and understand the results on the MEAP website?

For results posted on the MI School Info site, click on the “How do I understand MEAP scores?” link. For the more complex reports available on the MEAP web site, refer to the “Winter 2005 Guide to Reports” link on the MEAP information page. For further assistance in locating information, call the MEAP help line at 1-877-560-TEST or send an email to: MEAP@michigan.gov

4. Did schools have an opportunity to see test results and make corrections prior to the public release?

There was a two-week period after testing when schools had an opportunity to review their demographics data and tested students rosters used for this winter’s MEAP tests. The demographics include data such as gender, ethnicity, and other general student descriptors. Schools also had an opportunity during that time to crosscheck their roster of students who took the test with the number of tests scored for that school. Schools also were given access to their test results, through a secure website, for at least three days prior to the public release of the scores.

5. How many public school students took the Winter 2005 MEAP assessment?

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Math</i>	<i>Science</i>	<i>Social Studies</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Writing</i>	<i>Listening (Optional)</i>
4	119,687			118,746	118,652	50,971
5		122,655	122,509			
7				129,556	129,525	53,332
8	131,731	131,992	131,747			

6. Can a school's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) be determined by these MEAP test results?

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is one of the cornerstones of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. In Michigan, it's a measure of year-to-year student achievement on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) tests for English Language Arts and mathematics, as well as the percentage of students taking the tests, attendance rates, and graduation rates. In relation to these data sets and how they impact the various racial, ethnic, and economic groups of students in each school building and district, there are 50 distinct ways not to make AYP.

According to NCLB, Michigan and other states must develop target starting goals for AYP and the state must raise the bar in gradual increments so 100 percent of the students in the state are proficient on state assessments by the 2013-14 school year. AYP applies to each district and school in the state, with graduating consequences applying to schools that do not make AYP for two or more years.

Even though MEAP scores account for 100 percent of a school's AYP for testing achievement, a school's test scores should not be used at this time to indicate whether it did or did not make AYP, based upon a factor known as "Safe Harbor."

If a school or district does not meet the required MEAP percentages to make AYP based on achievement, it can still make AYP by improving its MEAP scores a certain amount from one year to the next (Safe Harbor), in combination with at least 95 percent participation and acceptable attendance or graduation rates. The required improvement in MEAP scores is based on each school's or district's current achievement level and reflects how far it is from having all students meet state standards.

7. What do the performance levels mean?

The MEAP tests measure what students know and can do in relation to the state curriculum standards.

All MEAP tests have four performance levels.

Level 1 – indicates that a student has “Exceeded Michigan Standards”

Level 2 – indicates that a student has “Met Michigan Standards”

Level 3 – indicates that a student has demonstrated “Basic” knowledge and skills of Michigan Standards

Level 4 – indicates that a student is considered to be at an “Apprentice” level, showing little success in meeting Michigan standards

The Listening portion of the English Language Arts test is optional and has only two performance levels:

Level M – “Met/Exceeded” Michigan Standards

Level D – “Did Not Meet” Michigan Standards

8. What does a one percent improvement in the scores represent?

A one-percentage point improvement in the number of students who Meet or Exceed state standards represents approximately 1,200-1,350 students statewide. A one percent improvement in the statewide scores would be cause to be cautiously optimistic, with an eye toward continued improvements in subsequent years. An improvement of three percentage points or more is considered significant.

A local district or school building would find it difficult to rely on such a change as a significant indicator for their much smaller population. In considering gains or declines in test scores of a school building or district, it is best to look for trends over at least a three-year period, as opposed to looking at a change in one year.

9. Who sets the standards for the MEAP tests?

Groups of educators, teachers, and school administrators with expertise in a subject and grade set the performance level standards for the MEAP tests. A skilled test expert guides this group through a nationally recognized process to set the standards.

10. Who scores MEAP tests?

Measurement Incorporated has been contracted to provide scoring services. Multiple-choice responses are machine scored and verified through a quality control process. Written responses are scored here in Michigan at two separate facilities by teams of extensively trained scorers.

Each written response is read by at least two independent scorers who use a method specifically developed for large-scale assessments. Quality control checks are in place to ensure consistency throughout the scoring process.

11. Who develops the tests?

Test development is a multi-stepped process involving thousands of Michigan school administrators, teachers, curriculum experts and students. Assessment Committees are convened from across the state with members chosen to represent the various educational professional organizations, local and intermediate school district educators.

Items are developed and reviewed by Bias Review Committees (BRC's) for fairness and to assure that no group is unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged. Educators and citizens representing the diverse demographics of the state are on these committees. Items are then reviewed by Content Advisory Committees (CAC's) comprised of classroom teachers and educators at the grade levels to be tested. All MEAP content is reviewed, primarily for two considerations: grade appropriateness and to ensure that items reflect Michigan curriculum standards. All items are field tested and reviewed a second time by the Bias and Content committees.

Test designs are developed involving content experts, teachers, school administrators and assessment experts. The content to be tested is identified from the state curriculum as well as the types and format of the items. Several items are identified to measure each component of the state curriculum. Items are different for each test cycle to limit teaching to the test, but they consistently measure the same components of the curriculum.

12. How often are the tests changed or updated, and why?

The test designs remain the same until a better design is identified or the curriculum changes. Different questions appear on tests from year to year but each item continues to assess the Michigan Curriculum Frameworks. Any time the tests change, educators are informed with sufficient time to adjust instruction before student scores and school results are used.

13. What process improvements have been made to speed the return of the test results this year?

Several steps were taken to speed up the return of complete and accurate reports:

- The move of MEAP responsibilities to the Department of Education and new leadership has improved direction and coordination.
- A contractor was released and responsibilities were reassigned with an increased attention to accountability.
- A comprehensive time and task schedule was implemented with careful monitoring.
- Schools were given a two-week opportunity to correct demographic information and identify missing results.

14. Why was there a revision in the writing results after they were first released to schools?

Early results released to schools included writing scores showed a decline in performance that did not appear reasonable. Further analysis revealed that the current year writing items were much more difficult than those used the previous year. Through statistical methods, an equating process was developed to account for the difference in item difficulty between the two years. Members of the Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability Technical Advisory Committee, including assessment experts from other states, approved the process and performance levels were recalculated statewide.

15. When will the testing changes mandated by the federal NCLB Act be implemented for all grades 3-8?

The federal *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* calls upon states to implement grade level assessments in reading and mathematics by the 2005 – 2006 school year. A science assessment must be given at least once at the elementary, middle, and high school levels by 2007 – 2008.